## HUNTING FOR EIDER DOWN

How the Norwegians Rob the Ducks of Their Nests to Obtain the Fleecy Stuff.

Peculiar Habits of an Animal Whose Nests Form Source of Income.

A Story of the Telescopic Habit of Down Bast Snakes as Told by a Connectiout Man.

Home Journal: The wonderful soft and warm substance which we call eider down is produced by the eider duck, an inhabitant of the Arctic ocean. It is proper to call these birds inhabitants of the ocean, for they pass the greater part of their lives far out at sea, only coming to land a little while in spring for the purpose of laying and hatching their eggs.

They are very awkward on land, but are wonderful swimmers and divers, descending twelve fathoms below the surface of the water and remaining submerged as long as five minutes at a time. Their food consists principally of mollusks, which they pick up from the bed of the sea.

Their favorite laying places are certain small islands of the coest of Norway, which are called "eider holms." The birds visit these islands iu pairs, which present a striking contrast in appearance, the drakes being brilliantly colored in black, white and green, while the females are of a dull reddish brown, matching the color of the scanty vegetation so perfectly that even a practised hunter can hardly distinguish them when they crouch down among the reeds.

On coming ashore the duck proceeds very deliberately to choose a place for a nest, while the drake follows and occasionally gives warning of real or fancied danger, The duck is very hard to suit, and it is not The duck is very hard to suit, and it is not an unusual thing for her, after examining all likely spots out of doors, to march boldly into a house and cooly select what she considers a suitable place for a nest, such as the oven if it happens to be unused at the time. The human inmates of the house welcome her gladly, supply her with food and cheerfully submit to any inconven iences like the temporary loss of their oven, for they know that their guest will pay a good price for her board and lodging. When the duck has selected a place she gathers grass and sticks and builds her nest. Then she plucks the soft down from her breast and makes a wonderful mat, which not only covers the bottom of the nest, but rises so far above the edge that it can be folded over the eggs when the duck leaves the nest in search of food.

When the six or eight eggs are laid they are seized, together with the valuable eider down mat, by the people of the house, and the duck goes off in sorrow to her mate, who awaits her on the shore, as his courage never rises to such a pitch as to lead him into the house.

The duck somewhat wiser than before,

The duck, somewhat wiser than before, proceeds to build another nest out of doors, proceeds to build another nest out of doors, and as her own down feathers are exhausted, she calmly plucks the drake's breast as bare as her own. After this outrageous treatment he goes off in disgust and rejoins his companions at sea. This time the duck is allowed to hatch her brood without human interference. But whenever she leaves the nest two or three eggs are liable to be stolen by some other duck who has a nest near by. The marauder carefully folds the down coverlid over the robbed nest again and carries the stolen eggs to nest again and carries the stolen eggs to her own nest. In this way the eggs are changed about so that a duck may finally hatch out a brood containing not a single one of her own offspring. As soon as the ducklings are all hatched out the mother,

ducklings are all hatched out the mother, or foster mother, if undisturbed, endeavors to lead her flock to the shore.

This march to the sea is to the ducklings what teething is to the human infants, the most "trying" time of their lives, for they are exposed to the attacks of birds of prey and other enemies. Usually the islanders interfere again at this point, but now their interference benefits the ducks as well as themselves. They gather the down and carry the ducklings in baskets to the shore, the old ducks following them very contentedly.

When the shore is reached the baskets are emptied into the water. The old ducks plunge in, and after a good deal of commotion swim out to sea, each followed by a flock of ducklings, some of which she has never seen before.

ever seen before. The duck does not always make her first nest in a house, of course, and if the first nest is not disturbed she will simply hatch her brood and put to sea with them, and the drake will not be robbed of his feathers. But the islanders are very watchful, and the irst nest rarely escapes, no matter where it

is built.

Sometimes the duck's down is sufficient to supply the second nest, and in this case the drake remains with his family. This nest is then robbed also, and the poor duck is forced to begin a third, with the help of the drake's down feathers. The rule among the eider-down hunters is to rob every nest until the drake's feathers, which differ in color from those of his mate, appear among the down. When this occurs it is known that the pair will build no more that year,

and the pair will build no more that year, and so the eggs are allowed to hatch in order to preserve the species.

A single nest will furnish at least an ounce of down, which is worth on the spot about twenty-five cents of our money. As the birds visit the islands in vast numbers, the collection and sale of the down mats is an important source of income to the inhabi-

other day when Walter saw a huge blackenake stretched motionless on a little hummuck not many rods from the cart. He

went to the serpent, which appeared to be dead, picked it up by the tail and threw it on the load. At the barn it was laid on the floor, and its stuffy look excited the curiosity of father and son. The blacksnake was not more than six

feet long, but its girth was enormous. Mr. feet long, but its girth was enormous. Mr. Cox, Sr., placed the tip of his boot on the snake's head, which now exhibited signs of life and some interest in the proceedings, and Walter, gripping the reptile about the throat, forced open its jaws. As the jaws parted Walter discerned the tail of another snake protruding from the black one's gullet. He wound his fingers about the slippery tail and yanked a water snake of medium size out of the blacksnake, whereat the big fellow emitted a sigh of relief and soon became so lively that the men had to kill it. came so lively that the men had to kill it. Exhilarated by their success, they made a careful examination of the remains to see whether the blacksnake had any more snakes concealed about his person, and finding no more they searched the water snake, actuated by a similar intent. In the water actuated by a similar intent. In the water

make they found a small striped snake and

nothing more; but now their curiosity was great to discover just how far the telescopic arrangement extended—whether there was a smaller snake in the striped serpent. Mr. Cox, Sr., put his boot tip on snake No. 3, while Walter pried open the striped serpent's mouth and searched him faithfully, But the reptile had nothing in him but a few trifles—a field mouse, a grasshopper and a few beetles. Both the striped and watersnake were dead when they were extracated.

CONDENSED RAILWAY TIME TABLE

Montana Central.

St. Paul, Atlantic ex., Butte and south. 4:00 p.;m Helena and Butte ex., Butte and south. 8:15 a. m Marysville ex. 4:10p.jm Marysville ex. 7:30 a. m Marysville ex. 8:15 a. m Marysville ex. 8:16 a. m Marysville ex. 8:17 a. m Marysville ex. 8:17 a. m Marysville ex. 8:18 a. m Marysville ex. 8:18 a. m Marysville ex. 8:19 a. m Marysvil

The incident noted tends to prove, some think, that snakes, like swallows, have a habit of flocking in autumn, and they do it

habit of flocking in autuma, and they do in a different way.

At North Ashford the other day, two boys, Charley Morse and Bertie Fish, caught and killed a big water snake that also was stuffed in a wonderfully liberal style. In the snake were sixty-one little water snakes, it was a fricky.

the snake were sixty-one little water snakes, all well and frisky.

Herbert Banning a Hadlyme farmer, had a similar experience one day this week while mowing his meadow on the bank of the Connecticut river. After he had killed a large and vicious water snake in the rank a large and vicious water shake in the rank grass he was surprised to see that a part of the serpent's body was tremendously swol-len, so that it was about as big as a man's thigh. He ripped the reptile open with his jacknife and a knot of twenty-nine samil snakes, varying in length from seven to nine inches, rolled out on the grass. Two nine inches, rolled out on the grass. Two
of the little ones were apart from the main
bunch and were tied in a perfectly formed
square knot. All were lively. The collection was seen by another Hadlyme man,
who professes to know all about snakes,
and he said it is a habit water snakes have
when fearful of the safety of their young
ones to open their mouths and let the little
chaps run into them and scatter about in
the department of the interior.

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The prize snake story of the season is told 'in', Killingsworth, Conn. Samuel Cox and his son Walter were carting hay from the Parker Hill meadow in that town the other day when Walter saw a huge black-

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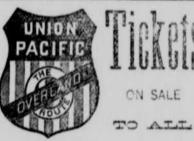
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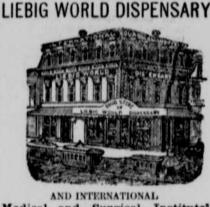
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